

SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY SHOWS HUBER AROUND BIOMASS PLANT

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Amador County – Members of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy last week toured the Buena Vista Biomass Power plant near Lone with Assemblywoman Alyson Huber. Sierra Nevada Conservancy Assistant Executive Director Joan Keegan and Area Representative Brandon Sanders took Huber Thursday morning through the plant, near Lone, which the conservancy said will help manage forests. They met with Buena Vista Biomass Power's lead engineer, Jim Williams, and Fred Tornatore of TSS Consulting. Sanders said they would show Huber around the operations there, where Sierra Nevada Conservancy is working toward supplying fuels through its national forest management programs. Aide Jennifer Wonnacott said Huber toured the facility, and a few months ago wrote a letter of support for the facility to the Amador County Board of Supervisors. Huber in the letter said she was "thrilled at the prospect of the biomass plant and its ability to create good jobs in an area that needs them so badly." The plant's partners say it will create about 100 jobs in the "greater Amador County region." Huber said the "project will provide a real economic benefit to the county, as well as support the state's renewable energy goals." The conservancy will supply slash piles from forest management trimmings, which will be incinerated for power generation while ridding the region's forests of fire risk. Keegan said the project has a "really good synergy," in removing forest fuels to generate power and also improve forest management. Sanders said Sierra Nevada Conservancy is "the only defined resource for this 25 million-acre area." Publicist Christina Vanskike in a release said Sierra Nevada Conservancy "was created with the understanding that the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada and its communities are closely linked and that the region would benefit from an organization providing strategic direction." SNC's goals include reducing "risk of natural disasters, such as wildfire," and assisting the regional economy. Buena Vista Biomass Power plans to have commercial operation by the middle of 2010. The 18-megawatt plant would burn only woody, "renewable" biomass, such as forest, agriculture, and "clean construction" wastes. Its partners say it offers a "clean outlet for hazardous fuel removal from vulnerable forestry lands." It would provide "renewable energy" for more than 16,000 homes and improve air quality by helping reduce open-air burning in both cities and forests. Sanders said Buena Vista Biomass Power has already secured an agreement to sell its electrical power. It has received permits from Amador County and is still working on permits with the Amador County Air Pollution Control District.

Story by Jim Reece jim@tspntv.com